

Fox Valley Technical Institute Building  
228 Algoma Boulevard  
Oshkosh  
Winnebago County  
Wisconsin

HABS No. WI-290

HABS  
WIS,  
70-OSH,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

FOX VALLEY TECHNICAL INSTITUTE BUILDING

HABS  
WIS  
70-0511  
2-

Location: 228 Algoma Boulevard

Leach's Map, Part of Lots 13, 15, 17 and 23 as  
described in Vol. 1233, page 224, Winnebago  
County Registrars Office, Block G.

Present Owner: Vocational District #12

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of

Significance:

The Fox Valley Technical Institute (FVTI) Building is an example of Beaux Art Classicism with regularly spaced rectangular windows set into an unadorned wall surface. The building is a masonry structure with two stories rising above a rusticated basement. Monumental Ionic Columns occur on the center pavilion of the 3-bay front elevation. The building represents an important point in the development of the local school system because of its commitment to public vocational and adult education.

PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection: 1926

Architect: Henry Auler

Builder: C.R. Meyer Construction Co., Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Historical Narrative

The FVTI Building was used as a vocational school since its completion in 1926. A broad curriculum of vocational and technical courses was offered to help students prepare for new occupations, keep them up-to-date with new technologies, and provide them with meaningful leisure-time activities. Full-time programs led to associate degrees, diplomas, or certificates. Some students attended on a part-time basis, day or evening, and the school offered open-ended programming, allowing students to attend at their own convenience and proceed at their own pace. Day and evening classroom attendance varied considerably, but overall, it is estimated that the facility served over 5,000 adults each year.

Historical importance of the FVTI Building lies in its architectural significance, as evidenced by its Beaux Arts Classic style of which many major public buildings of the period were constructed. The Beaux Art Classic style shaped the appearance of the 1893 Columbian Exposition World's Fair in Chicago. William Waters, a local architect, designed the Wisconsin Building for the Columbian Exposition and although it was not a classical building, he became attuned to the spirit of the Exposition and brought the style back to the City of Oshkosh.

Waters' contributions to the historic fabric of Oshkosh are numerous. In addition to the Oshkosh Public Library, the First Baptist Temple, Oshkosh Post Office, and Paine Thrift Bank, Mr. Waters also designed the Orville Beach Manual Training Center at 240 Algoma Boulevard. The 1911 "Beach Building" is immediately adjacent to the FVTI Building and was connected to the FVTI Building by a brick corridor when the newer structure was completed in 1926.

Although Waters died in 1917, Henry Auler, a local protege and associate of Waters, continued the Beaux Art Classic style began by Waters. In 1926 the Auler designed FVTI Building was completed with a three-story front facade matching the Waters designed Beach Building to the west. Upon its 1926 completion, the building was known as the Oshkosh Technical Institute and was the first public educational institution in the City to offer vocational and adult education beyond the high school level.

Biographical Information - William Waters

William Waters was born in Delaware County, New York. He attended public schools and, for one year, the Polytechnic Institute at Troy, New York (now Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute). Waters was also employed by the railroad before he moved to Oshkosh.

Waters' first employment in Oshkosh involved drafting plans for the Oshkosh Normal School. From this, he developed into the most popular of the local architects, practicing in the City and surrounding area from 1867 to his death in 1917.

The destruction of much of Oshkosh by fires in the early 1870's resulted in a ready market for Waters' commercial and residential designs. Waters provided plans for much of the north main commercial area during this period. Later, infill buildings were designed by Waters in the Queen Anne Style.

Waters was equally adept at residential design. Stylistically his designs reflect the progression from Italianate to the early twentieth century Beaux Art and Classic Revivals.

Waters' public buildings of the Beaux Art Classic Style include the existing City Hall and Beach Building, indicated on the attached site plan. Before Waters' death, he entered into an association with a local architectural protege, known as Henry Auler. Auler continued the Beaux Art Classic Style of Waters with the construction of the FVTI Building in 1926.

Biographical Information - Henry Auler

Henry Auler was born in Oshkosh and received his education from the Oshkosh public schools and the University of Wisconsin. Auler opened his architectural office in 1907, and was soon associated with William Waters. During this period, the firm completed the City High School at 215 Church Avenue (now City Hall - OS 10/26).

Following Waters' death in 1917, Auler formed a partnership with James P. Jensen. This firm designed many of the public buildings including the Masonic Temple at 204 Washington Avenue (OS 10/4), the Paine Thrift Bank at 1621 Congress Avenue (OS 10/19), and the Wisconsin National Life Insurance Company building at 220 Washington Avenue (OS 10/13). Wallace Brown was also associated with the firm and was involved in much of the design of the public buildings and private residences. Residential work in the 1920's and 30's included designs influenced by the Prairie School (1103 Washington OS 9/23; 1212 Algoma WN 27/35) and Tudor Revival (1219 Bayshore Or. OS 16/14; 530 Algoma OS 12/5).

Brown left the firm during World War II. The firm was reorganized as Auler, Irion and Wertsch in 1947. Auler died four years later in Oshkosh.

Site Information:

The FVTI Building is situated in a mature environment three blocks west of the central business district. Neighborhood properties include a mixture of institutional, civic, office, commercial, and residential land uses. The subject property is on the same block as the City Hall and the new Public Safety Building (City and County). The remainder of the block includes residences, some of which are currently being used for office purposes, and a funeral home. Surrounding properties are City-owned and include a closed school (Beach Building) and the Recreation Gymnasium. There are several churches in adjoining blocks, and the Winnebago County Courthouse is one block to the west. The campus of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh is a few blocks to the west.

The FVTI Building site, identified on the site plan, comprises approximately 42,747 square feet. The nearly rectangular parcel has approximately 143 feet of frontage on the northerly line of Algoma Boulevard and an average depth of about 309 feet. The land is at street grade and slopes gently upward toward the rear.

#### Building Information:

The building, completed in 1926, contains a gross floor area of 56,760 square feet and was designed for its present use as a vocational school. The three-story reinforced concrete structure has a street facade finished with masonry in a Beaux Art Classic Style, side and back walls of face brick, and backup masonry of common brick.

The interior of the building consists of concrete floors on a reinforced concrete frame. Windows are primarily the original double-hung wood sash. Floor finish includes terrazzo in the corridors and stairs, hardwood on sleepers in some of the classrooms, and new resilient floor finish in some other areas. The tile partitions and furred ceilings are finished with plaster.

The building is served by plumbing, sewerage, fluorescent lighting, a passenger elevator, and a fire alarm system. The building is heated by a two-pipe steam system, with steam supplied by a remote central heating plant serving all the municipal buildings in the group.

The building generally has an efficient layout, with classrooms and shop areas of adequate size. Some functional obsolescence is evident in the construction materials, high ceilings, lack of air conditioning, and wood windows which contribute to heat loss.

#### Ownership History:

The FVTI Building was constructed in 1926 on a parcel of land whose ownership at that time transferred from the City of Oshkosh to the Oshkosh Technical Institute. The land and building have remained under the original ownership until this day. In 1967, State of Wisconsin Statutes mandated

a reorganization of local vocational-technical institutions. The Oshkosh Technical Institute was given broader jurisdiction and renamed the Fox Valley Vocational Technical and Adult Education District #12, which currently owns the structure, deed listed in Volume 1233, page 224, Winnebago County Register of Deeds.

Project Information:

The City of Oshkosh has developed a redevelopment plan and Tax Increment Finance District known as the Algoma/Church Redevelopment Area. The proposed project involves four buildings designed by William Waters and his associate, Henry Auler, in the 200 Block of Algoma Boulevard. The western most building, City Hall, and the eastern most building, Recreation Gymnasium, will remain as is and continue to be maintained in original exterior form.

The Algoma/Church Redevelopment Project involves the City of Oshkosh acquiring the Beach Building and Fox Valley Technical Institute Building and turning them over to the selected developer, MRI Associates of Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The MRI proposal is to rehabilitate the vacant Beach Building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Preservation and demolish the FVTI Building. The FVTI site will then be used for landscaped open space and parking. Plans call for the demolition of the FVTI Building in the autumn of 1983. This historical documentation of the FVTI Building was completed by Phil Rosenquist, Associate Planner, City of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in accordance with the March, 1983, Memorandum of Agreement and subsequent HABS/HAER requirements outlined in U.S. Department of the Interior document H4217 (RMR-CR).

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Intensive Historic Resource Survey for the City of Oshkosh: Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff, September, 1981.

Algoma/Church Redevelopment Area Preliminary Case Report: City of Oshkosh. Department of Community Development, February, 1983.

Commemorative Biographical Record of the Fox River Valley, Counties of Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago. Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1895.

Oshkosh Daily Northwestern: Architect No More, December 15, 1917.

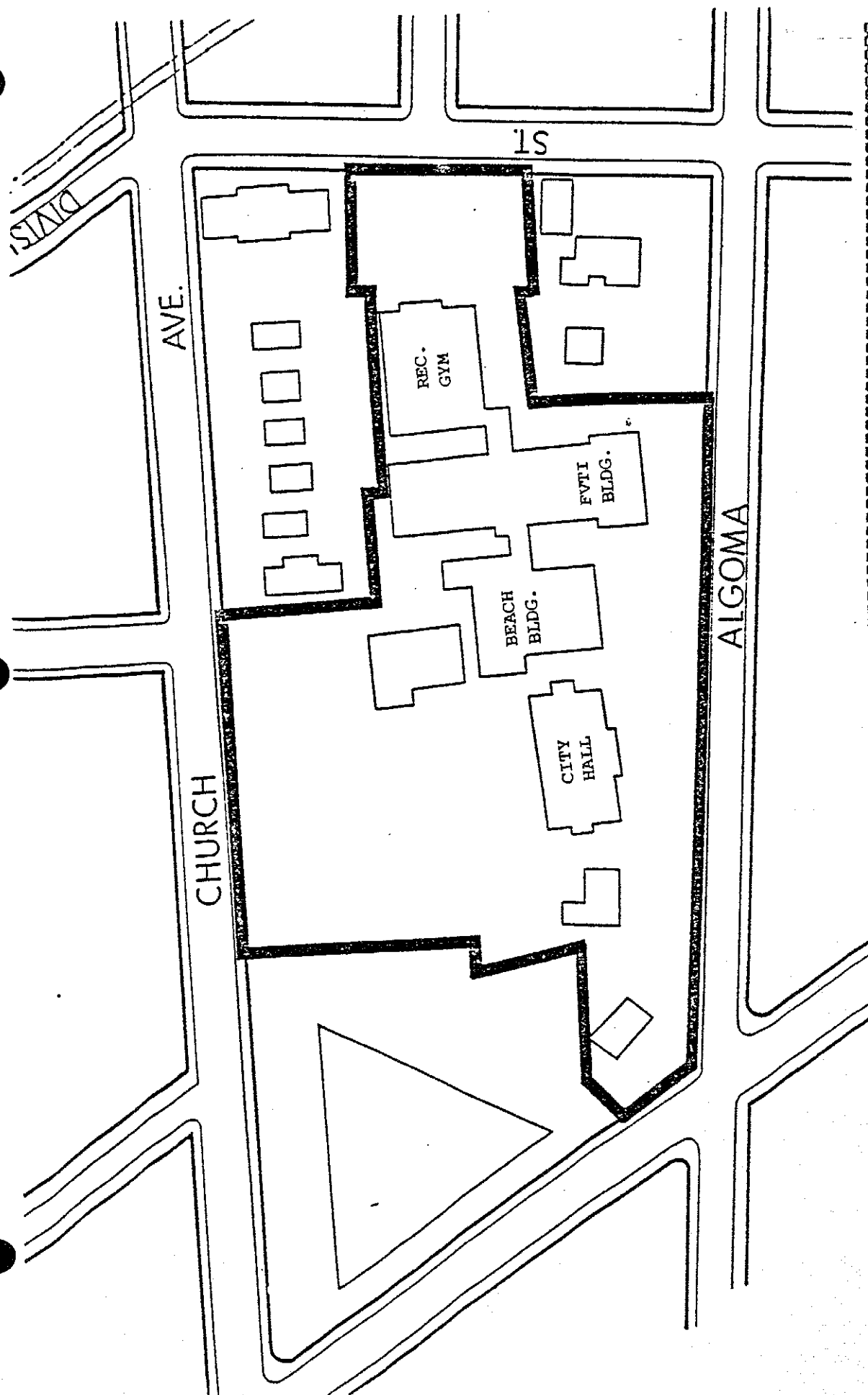
Oshkosh Daily Northwestern: Henry Auler's Obituary, January 6, 1951.

Interview with Robert Martin, Fox Valley Technical Institute. Mr. Martin has been employed by the Fox Valley Technical Institute for over 20 years.

Appraisal Report. Fox Valley Technical Institute: American Appraisal Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April, 1982.

Winnebago County, Register of Deeds, Volume 1233, Page 224.





ALGOMA / CHURCH

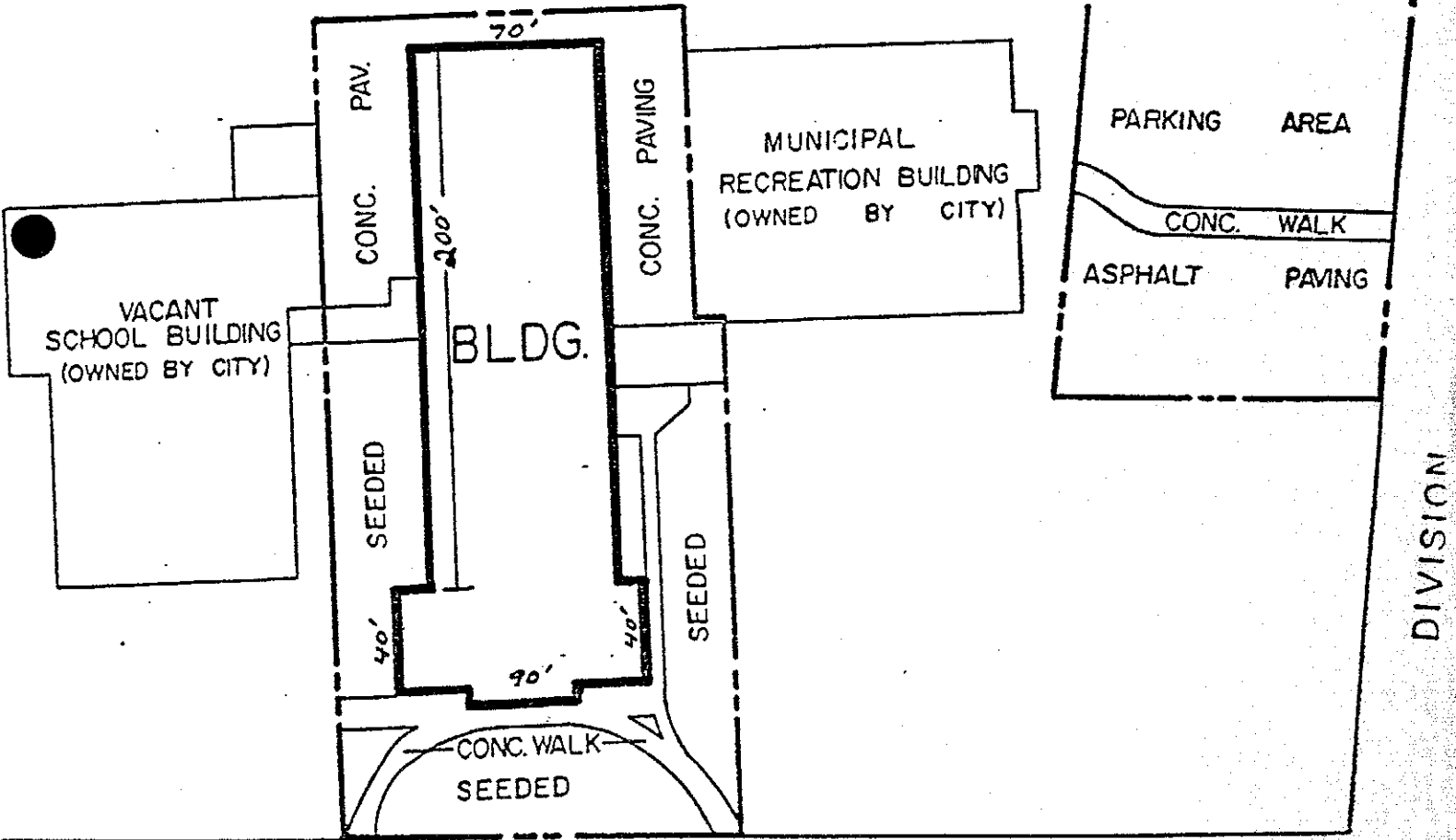
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

AREA #1

PROJECT BOUNDARY

CHURCH

AVENUE



ALGOMA

BOULEVARD